

Newton Housing and Community Development Program Neighborhood Advisory Committee Roles and Responsibilities

Purpose

The Neighborhood Advisory Committees (NACs) serve in an advisory capacity to the Newton Housing and Community Development staff and the Planning and Development Board on matters pertaining to the expenditure of federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds on neighborhood public improvements projects. The NACs' primary responsibility is to determine the public improvements needs of the target neighborhood in which they serve; to develop objectives, strategies and public improvements projects that will address those needs; and to monitor the progress of the projects as they are implemented.

Membership

The NACs consist of up to fifteen (15) members. Committee members must either reside in or own a business in the target neighborhood. It is City policy to include, whenever possible, low- and moderate-income residents, representatives of the business community, people with disabilities, elderly persons and persons of color.

Advisory Committee members go through a two-stage process to be appointed to the NACs, which includes filling out an application and attending an interview with Mayor Setti Warren. All Advisory Committee members are appointed by the Mayor.

People who are not appointed to serve as members of an NAC, will be considered Interested Citizens and may still receive meeting notices and other information from Housing and Community Development Program staff.

Background

Each year, the City of Newton receives approximately \$2.2 million in CDBG funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The CDBG program's mission is to preserve and develop viable urban communities. In addition to neighborhood improvements, the funding is spent on activities such as affordable housing development, housing rehabilitation, economic development, architectural access and human services. Approximately \$160,000 of the annual funding is allocated to public improvements projects each year in one of Newton's four target neighborhoods.

Public improvements projects are funded based on neighborhood needs identified in the five-year Consolidated Plan, which the NACs are active in developing along with Housing and Community Development Program staff and appropriate city departments. The NACs make recommendations to the Planning and Development Board, which then makes recommendations to the Mayor. The upcoming five-year plan runs through June 30, 2015. Committee appointments are coterminous with the upcoming five-year plan which ends on June 30, 2015.

Typical Duties

- Identify neighborhood needs
- Develop prioritized list of objectives, strategies and possible projects to address the identified needs
- Work with program staff to host public meetings to get wider public input on identified neighborhood needs, objectives, strategies and possible projects
- Review neighborhood improvement project applications from City departments and make recommendations on which projects to fund

- Make five-year and annual allocation recommendations to the Planning and Development Board on the use of CDBG neighborhood improvement funds

Time Commitment

NAC meetings take place in the evening on average 2-4 times per year, with additional meetings held as needed during periods of project review or during the development of the Consolidated Plan. At project review meetings, NAC members examine and comment on the design of specific neighborhood projects during both the design and implementation stages of the project. As mentioned above, during the development of the Consolidated Plan, more frequent meetings are held to gather input on neighborhood needs and then to develop strategies, objectives and projects for addressing them.

Eligible projects

HUD defines public improvements as improvements to sites and facilities that are either publicly owned or traditionally provided by the government, or owned by a nonprofit and operated to serve the general public. Examples include:

- Parks and playgrounds
- Curbs and sidewalks
- Sewer and water facilities
- Public buildings, such as libraries, recreation centers, and police and fire stations
- Conservation areas
- Day care centers
- Traffic signals
- Pedestrian crosswalks
- Aesthetic amenities on public land, such as landscaping, tree plantings and fountains